

Heroic Afghan Feminists, Doctors, and the Global Civilians Helping Them



I am not so sure that we've entirely lost the war in Afghanistan. Although people insist that America and Europe did not go into Afghanistan in order to Westernize its people, it is clear that we were successful in doing just that for a large part of the population, especially the women.

They are the ones who are now being targeted by the Taliban. Women are the ones who are desperate to be evacuated and taken out to freedom. These women never cease to amaze and humble me.

Consider Esin, a journalist who is now living in her second or

third safe house. She is on the run from the Taliban who are hunting for her. In the past, she both exposed them in the media and organized a demonstration against them just before the country fell. Esin says:

"Once I was captured by the Taliban who beat me. They had proof of what I was doing. They beat me again after the demonstration and seriously warned me."

This hero is not filled with any self-pity. She is mainly "sad for her daughter's future life"—even though she herself is a woman with two advanced degrees who must now "sit in her house with no chance of going outside."

She is strongly science and business-oriented. Esin's family respects her views and educational accomplishments. She thinks of herself as a "modern," not as a "western" person. She wants the "same rights as men have."

She is both "modern" and "non-western" in that she remains connected to her family and feels responsible for taking care of them. She probably cannot envision leaving without them. Esin also has no strong views about or against religion. She is her own kind of feminist.

Zaafirah is also a journalist and a "woman's rights activist"—her phrase, not mine. She is also a wife, mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law—and her mother was a "woman's rights activist" before her. She tells me:

"Now, we are under serious threats as both I and my husband have written articles against Taliban politics and Taliban policies. In the last four months, we have lost our home, car, and everything. They came to our door with guns in their hands, we left everything and escaped to friends and relatives. The Taliban found us again and we had to find other safe houses. I sold all my jewelry in order to feed my children. We are living like prisoners, with an unknown future. We cannot live our whole lives in hiding. And in

silence. Every day there is a story to tell but we cannot tell it due to the death threats hanging over our heads. I am worried about my kids' mental health. My daughter is dreaming of her happy school days, my son wants toys and is crying for his cartoons daily."

They are all imprisoned, and prisoners always eventually have medical issues. This particular hero has begun to suffer from daily headaches and fears that she is bound to become seriously depressed given her children's future.

We are working with those who are delivering food, medicine, blankets, warmer winter clothing, and arranging for physician home visits. I cannot name all the heroes, because it would put some of them at risk, but I can name some. As I've previously [written elsewhere](#):

"The Afghan Medical Corps (AMC) was built by one extremely brave Afghan physician" who himself has been targeted by the Taliban," Ryan Mauro, director of [Clarion Intelligence Network](#) and the founder of the [Afghan Rescue Project](#), told me Wednesday. Nevertheless,

"[H]e has put on elaborate disguises to get into hospitals and check on patients...has ridden in the back of food trucks to make house calls. He has put Taliban flags on his car to bluff his way through Taliban checkpoints to see patients in need...Since the formation of the AMC under this one Doctor, we have grown to over two hundred physicians, and a dozen midwives. Our latest project is the development of pregnancy kits to include supplies for during pregnancy and after delivery."

Writer [Russ Pritchard](#), another American, has been in charge of helping to administer the AMC, which is also known "as the closest thing to God on the streets of Kabul." He was pulled into this adventure as he was editing a manuscript for an Army Ranger who then asked him to help with an evacuation – and the

rest is history. Even as we were communicating Wednesday, Russ told me:

“Phyllis, as we type each other I’m arranging, via a doctor in hiding, an emergency baby formula drop for a mother who is having problems breast feeding, and arranging emergency dialysis for a 28-year-old mother whose kidneys have shut down. She will be going to a hospital under a fake name under the supervision of a doctor who will destroy all paperwork so she does not exist and dialysis is free. Over Thanksgiving weekend, we had fifteen baby deliveries. We field at least 12-18 calls a day.”

I have known about Ryan Mauro and this group’s work for quite a while. I have known about Clarion’s work, with which he has been affiliated, for even longer. His Afghan Rescue Project is now also co-ordinating with two of our women who handled the evacuations out when evacuations out were possible. Now, they too are handling food deliveries. Ryan and Russ are also connecting me with women whom I am interviewing—such as the two quoted in this piece. Russ has just given me a horrifying story of a Taliban gang-rape, after which these demons poured boiling water on the raped woman’s genitalia and her legs. She is in a sad and sorry shape.

The Afghan women call me and the members of my various teams “dear,” and “Respected Madam.” Unlike so many Western feminists, they are both kind and respectful towards their elders. They praise us for caring about them, for remaining connected to them, for remembering them. They take nothing for granted. (I know, some evacuees have been demanding and more than a bit difficult. This is another crop, another miraculous demographic.)

One Afghan woman whom my team managed to get out and who is now in Europe, asked to read my book [*An American Bride in Kabul*](#). I was afraid that she might disconnect from me due to my radical feminist views and my critique of her country. On

the contrary. She wrote that:

"You understand the hidden, other side of Afghanistan... I cried when I read [your words]: 'Afghan men and women know that life can change in an instant; that happiness is brief and illusory; that one is utterly dependent on one's faith and one's family and on the strongest man in the family; that poverty, cruelty, and tragedy are to be expected...' You observed Afghans deeply and you wrote in a way that a real Afghan author will not be able to do... (even though you are writing about long ago) unfortunately, even in 2021, nothing has really changed."

There is no greater praise for a writer than this. A book that begins in 1959 and continues until 2013, when I published it, has found favor in the eyes of a young Afghan woman whom we were just privileged to help free in 2021.

In my view, these Afghan women's rights activists represent Civilization and its eternal battle against Barbarism. Our western and modern influence has created the space and the ideas that now guide and empower them, ideas and ideals which they hope to carry into the future.

That's assuming they survive this winter in hiding. It is now very clear that humanitarian parole applications will not be acted upon for a very long time and there is no guarantee that they will ever be accepted. So far, we have had one application rejected—and nothing else acted upon.

The guidelines for accepting humanitarian applications in the USA have recently grown far more stringent. Our need for legal services—which were required—now pale in comparison with our need for funds so that our women and their families will at least survive in the coming months. We are now reallocating funds gathered for legal services to the delivery of necessities.

If you wish to remain connected to the feminists and their

families who remain trapped and in hiding; if you wish to become part of this history, please consider donating to the [Afghan Rescue Project](#). They are doing God's work.

First published in [4W](#).